

Thank you Chairman Hagedorn and working group members for affording me the chance to speak today.

My name is Jonathan Miller. I am an emergency medicine physician working at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, and I'm also a proud member of the Idaho Air National Guard. I am here today to voice my concern over 78,000 of our neighbors who lack health insurance. I want to thank you for working so diligently to come up with a solution.

As you know, patients without health insurance still get health care; they get fractured, inefficient, health care. They get it from me and my colleagues in emergency departments throughout the state. Rather than providing cost effective, preventative care we treat previously preventable, now end stage, diseases. We have become their primary care doctors. My commitment to the practice of medicine makes me honored to have become their safety net, yet there has to be a better way.

Recently I began working part time in the ER in Salmon, Idaho. Lemhi County is one of the most impoverished counties in our state with over 20% of its population below the poverty line. Anecdotally, I've spoken to a few local residents who, when faced with a perceived emergency from a chronic condition, decide to drive north to Missoula to receive care because they know the typical air ambulance transfer would ruin them financially.

Even more troubling to me are the results of a recent Lancet study which estimated 9,000 veterans in Idaho are uninsured. These are hardworking people that served proudly. While a Purple Heart garners respect and guarantees VA coverage due to one's disability, for some "lucky" soldiers separating from the military without a scratch on their body, many have nothing offered to them in return.

There must be a solution that we can implement! We can do better. I urge you to support Close the Gap's proposed plan. We can stop utilizing inefficient indigent programs and instead get Idaho residents plugged in with the great primary care physicians and specialists we have throughout the state. I am fiscally conservative, but I can honestly tell you that creating essential coverage for those without insurance will lead to savings in the future. I recommend considering a waiver that requires a nominal co-pay in order to receive care. This would encourage citizens to be conservative health care consumers, while still allowing them to receive life changing care.

Again, thank you for giving us a platform today to voice our concern over this important topic. If you have any questions, I invite you to contact me. Thank you for listening and for your consideration.

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